

# **School Junior BioBlitz**

## **Connecticut State Museum of Natural History**

The Museum/School event, patterned after the Museum's BioBlitz, will engage the entire school population in a full-day, end-of-the-year learning activity - Junior BioBlitz. The overall goal is to get students outside to use the information and skills that they have learned in the classroom to discover, observe, discuss, and evaluate. It will focus on the processes of the science and relationships in the natural world. The Junior BioBlitz is designed and coordinated to be consistent and comparable across schools and years.

The Junior BioBlitz will take place in the schoolyard and surrounding natural areas. Students will be placed on Species Teams. Each team will be comprised of 1) finders, 2) identifiers, 3) recorders, and 4) announcers. Teams will be comprised of students who have been through the course and younger students who have not been through the course (depending on school population). This will foster peer teaching and learning. Depending on how many students are involved, several students on each team will be a Bird Species Team, a Mammal Species Team, a Spider Species Team, a Beetle Species Team, etc.

The school grounds will be divided into sections by habitat, if they are obvious. If they are not, the schoolyard can be divided using other obvious boundaries such as swings or ball fields. The teachers and advisors will help determine the appropriate divisions. The reason for dividing the schoolyard into sections is to prompt discussion on why species are found in certain areas.

Students will use guides, tally sheets, and other material that they have created during the course of the year. Students will identify the species to the best of their ability, which may be to the species level of birds and mammals but only to the group level for insects (e.g., cardinal, gray squirrel, red beetle). It will be emphasized to the students that this is exactly how the scientists in the Museum's BioBlitz record species, to the best of their ability. That is, if we have scientists that are experts on spiders, spiders are identified to species level but if we do not have a spider expert on our team, we will only know that we have 12 different species but not the names of those species.

As the species are identified, they will be recorded on tally sheets. At the end of the survey period, Species Teams will total the number of Species on their tally sheets and report to the group what they have found. A total count will then be put together. Following this, teachers will lead a summative discussion on what they found and why, finally, on the relevance of those findings to their lives.